

VZCZCXRO4847  
RR RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHNH RUEHPB RUEHPOD  
DE RUEHHI #1869/01 3050325  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 010325Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 6631  
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH 3885  
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001869

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, EAP/RSP, EAP/PD, OES/PCI  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR ANE, G/ENV  
STATE PASS TO EPA/OIA (DENNIS CUNNINGHAM AND MARK KASMAN)  
STATE PASS TO EPA/ORD (KEVIN TEICHMAN)  
STATE PASS TO NOAA/NOS/OIA (JONATHAN JUSTI)  
STATE PASS TO OGHA/HHS (STIEGER/VALDEZ/HICKEY)  
CDC FOR OGHA (BLOUT/MCCALL) AND NCEH (THOMAS SINKS)  
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE (THOMAS SHUBERT AND WILLIAM VAN HOUTEN)  
HHS PASS TO FIC/NIH (GLASS) AND NIEHS/NIH  
BANGKOK PASS TO RDMA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [KSCA](#) [TBIO](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAM: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH MINISTER OF NATURAL  
RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

REF: HANOI 1570

HANOI 00001869 001.2 OF 002

¶1. (SBU) Summary: On October 30, the Ambassador paid an introductory courtesy call on Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Nguyen Khoi Pham. Pham said his ministry's main environmental challenges include the management of solid waste, air and water pollution, and natural disaster mitigation. The minister briefly discussed the mysterious oil spills that blackened Vietnam's beaches in early 2007 and requested technical assistance for an oil spill monitoring system. He also thanked the USG for its past help in planning to counter dioxin contamination and asked the Ambassador for future assistance saying, "I need your support." End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) On October 30, the Ambassador paid an introductory courtesy call on Minister of Natural Resources and Environment Pham Khoi Nguyen. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) was established in 2002 to consolidate existing institutions responsible for land administration, minerals, water resources, hydrometeorology, survey mapping, and environmental protection, including the preservation of the seas and coastal zones.

#### MITIGATING POLLUTION AND OIL SPILLS

-----

¶3. (SBU) Minister Pham said MONRE's main environmental challenges include the management of solid waste, natural disaster mitigation, and air and water pollution. He said MONRE views the cleanup of Vietnam's increasingly polluted river systems as a priority, and said his ministry also faces the task of closing or relocating some 3,000 antiquated factories due to increasingly severe air pollution. In reference to Vietnam's many low lying coastal areas, Pham said MONRE is also focused on the threat of rising seas due to global warming.

¶4. (SBU) Minister Pham termed "a problem" the mysterious oil spills that blackened Vietnam's beaches early in 2007. He said that a

March 2007 spill affected eighteen of Vietnam's 46 provinces, and fouled 3,200 kilometers of coastline. He requested technical assistance to establish a monitoring system to allow responders to contain future spills (Note: Various GVN entities have made many similar requests for assistance via numerous channels over the past year. Per reftel, MONRE now appears to have responsibility for coordinating GVN oil pollution policy and activities End Note.)

15. (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's query, Pham said his ministry would play a limited role in the resolution of maritime boundary disputes with China in the South China Sea, despite MONRE's responsibilities in the area of topographical mapping. He also said MONRE is not involved in granting offshore oil and gas licenses but is responsible for issuing mineral exploration rights.

#### DIOXIN ISSUES

16. (SBU) Turning to dioxin, the Ambassador noted past U.S. technical and financial support provided to the GVN for planning dioxin remediation efforts, coordinated through MONRE's Office 33, and said he hoped the two sides could collaborate on future studies. Since 2001, the USG has expended over \$2 million to improve scientific capacity and support cleanup of dioxin contamination at Danang Airport. Minister Pham recalled that he led a delegation to Singapore in November 2000 to meet with USG officials and sign the Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation regarding dioxin contamination. Pham thanked the USG for its help to date and asked the Ambassador for continued assistance saying, "I need your support."

17. (SBU) Comment: Vietnam's rapid economic growth continues to strain the nation's capacity to protect its environment and manage its natural resources. The GVN seems to recognize this, as shown by the focus paid to public health and environmental issues by Prime Minister Dung in his recent speech before the National Assembly.

HANOI 00001869 002.2 OF 002

Thus, MONRE likely will find itself at the center of many high-profile issues during Minister Pham's tenure. Strengthening U.S. engagement, via multilateral efforts, on Agent Orange/dioxin, combined with broad U.S. environmental assistance programs, make Minister Pham an increasingly important Embassy interlocutor. End Comment.

MICHALAK